

Factors Contributing to Suicidal Behaviours among the Youths in Nyandarua Central in Nyandarua County, Kenya

Jane Wambui Macharia¹, Wambua Pius Muasa (PhD)²

¹*Chemchemi Ya Uzima Institute, Karen, Nairobi, Kenya*

²*Institute of Youth Studies, School of Arts and Social Sciences, Tangaza University College, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya.*

Abstract: Globally, suicide has been identified by World Health Organization as the third leading causes of death among young people. Despite of increase of suicide among youths in Nyandarua, there is lack of studies to uncover the factors leading to suicide and therefore, the current study had the following objectives: To explore the family risk factors that dispose the youth to suicidal behaviours in Nyandarua Central Kenya; to examine the knowledge parents have on the youth suicidal behaviours of Nyandarua Central Kenya and to explore strategies that can be used by youth stakeholders to prevent suicidal behaviours among youths in Nyandarua central Kenya. The study employed exploratory research design. The study population were youths and stakeholders who included parents, teachers, nurses, chief and Church ministers. Through purposive sampling 16 participants were selected to participate in the study. The study employed Interview Guide to collect data. Thematic analysis was utilized for data analysis. The risk factors to suicidal behaviour among youths in Nyandarua were dysfunctional families; financial constraints; inappropriate use of social media; domestic abuse; and drug abuse. The parents had knowledge on indicators of suicide among youth including withdraw and loneliness; poor grooming; absenteeism from school; threatening of committing suicide; and poor relationship with the parents. The findings strategies to prevent suicidal behaviour among youths in Nyandarua were: Guidance and counselling; sensitization through workshops and seminars; support groups; and engaging youths in sports. Based on the findings, the study recommends stakeholders to work in collaboration towards helping youths to cope better with challenges of life.

I. INTRODUCTION

Globally, suicide has been identified by World Health Organization (2018) as the third leading causes of death among young people. The United International Children Educational Fund (UNICEF) (2017), reported that New Zealand has one of the World's suicidal cases caused by bullying in schools, family issues and stress. The age affected more is between 15 – 30 years of age. Joiner (2010) observed that suicide attempts describe completed suicides in their life in future and therefore, any attempts should be taken seriously. UNICEF also reported (2012), there are high suicide cases due to conflict between the children and their parents who have high expectation of academic achievements. Those who fail to achieve high academic levels are likely to be frustrated leading to committing suicide.

The increase of suicide has also been reported in Africa. For instance, Fever (2018), from South Africa reported that there is high suicide behaviour among the youth between 14- 30 years due to poor social relationships, religion differences, alcoholic, and the cultural beliefs. Use of drowning, self-poisoning, hanging and jumping from high places is common among them. The excessive use of Social Media affects the mental health and loneliness among the young people. There is high increase of anxiety which leads to frequency depression and then it results to suicide cases. Moreover, a study by Hakeen (2020), from Nigeria found that the suicide cases are alarming at a high rate and drastically measures have to be taken. Every Nigerian is born with great vision and dreams and as they grow older these hopes, dreams and visions fade away because of some risk factors and depression crawls in since they never thought they can be defeated. Pain mixes with anger, guilt, and regrets. Media 2019, reported the story of a 300- level student of Medicine and Surgery who committed suicide by drowning himself into a river because of failing his examination. He could not absorb the disappointment despite attending counselling class organized by the University for affected students before being asked to withdraw from the Institution.

Also, suicide in Kenya among young people has been reported. For instance, Khasakhala, Ndeti and Mathai (2013), carried a study in Kenya and found that suicidal behaviours are associated with alcohol abuse, substance use, love affairs among the youth, maternal depression disorders and perceived maternal rejecting parenting behaviour among the youth. The most affected group is between 14 - 20 years of age. Adolescents experience changes physically, emotionally, psychologically and economical changes as they passes from childhood to adulthood. Most of them take risk in their life and it is the duty of the parents and the society to prevent and to take measures to mitigate any dangerous consequences while taking risks in the life. Likewise, according to Wanyoike (2015), suicidal behaviours in Kenya are associated with alcohol and substance abuse, love affairs among the youth, postpartum depression, and perceived maternal rejecting parenting behaviour among the youth. The most affected group is between 14 - 20 years of age. Adolescents experience changes physically, emotionally, psychologically and

financially as they pass from childhood to adulthood. Most of them take risks in their life and it is the duty of the parents and the society to prevent and take measures to mitigate any dangerous consequences.

Wango (2013) attributed the rising of causes of suicide in Kenya especially among the school youths due to high demanding curriculum that requires them to excel in their studies. Most suicide behaviours are reported between December and March, as a result of what psychologist's term as pressure to prove their worth as the inability to continue with the next level of education. The number of youths who commit suicide was increasing with a very high rate even those who are in university. Nyandarua County OCPDO Diego reported one case of suicide every week in the Sub- County and twenty cases across the County. Most of the victims are the young men more than women. Based on high rate of suicide among youths, the current study was conducted to explore the family risk factors that dispose the youth to suicidal behaviours in Nyandarua Central Kenya; to examine the knowledge parents have on the youth suicidal behaviours of Nyandarua Central Kenya and to explore strategies that can be used by youth stakeholders to prevent suicidal behaviours among youths in Nyandarua central Kenya.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The psychoanalytic theory of personality by Sigmund Freud, argued that human behaviour is as a result of the interactions between id, ego and superego. The theory sees human functioning based upon the interaction of drives and forces within the person, particularly unconscious and different structures of the personality. The childhood personality can remain in the unconscious, and cause problems later in life. Joiner and Ribeiro (2014) reported that suicide is harmful, frightening, and misunderstood behaviour. It can seem paradoxical and also seems to go against the basic human motivations of self-preservation and avoidance of pain. In order to understand this, the psychoanalytic theory tries to explain the suicidal and various social conditions incorporate within the person to produce a vulnerable personality. The individual may be influenced by these environmental and social system factors to cause suicidal behaviour. According to Yakely (2014), self-harm and suicide may be seen as acts with unconscious meanings, communications that manifest the repressed thoughts, feelings and fantasies that are difficult to manifest in conscious mind or put them into words. Self-harm can be seen as a punishment for any gratification that may have experienced unconscious sense of guilt, caused by helplessness and powerlessness in the face of abuse.

In addition, the study was also grounded on interpersonal theory of suicide. This theory attempts to explain why individuals engage in suicidal behaviours and it identify those who are at risks. It further explains that the most dangerous form of suicidal desire is caused by two interpersonal constructs which are thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness. Some people go through very hard moments in life and they are able to overcome while others do

unable to overcome and tend to think that suicidal behaviour is the solution (Orden et al., 2010). The theory proposes that, fearlessness of death enhances readiness without minding if fear is acquired positively through trauma exposure or high risk of leisure activities. The suicidal behaviour is separated from the desire to engage in suicidal behaviour thus showing the areas of the weakness which can be as a result of substance use and terminal physical illness. Franklin et al. (2017), who further reports that, traumatic events and exposure to risk factors are exposed to risk factors from domestic violence, relationship breakdown, loss of a job or loss of a close person. Several attempts of suicidal behaviour, reduces the fear of death and associated pain. The feelings of failure and motivation to escape occur to the person though they are not enough to attempt suicide. One goes through a process of thinking about suicide and others find that there is no way to escape leading to suicide.

Family Risk Factors that Predispose the Youth to Suicidal Behaviours

Research has shown that both attempted suicides are directly linked to negative parent-child relationships (Oppenheimer, Stone & Hankin, 2018). These may include the child maltreatment, family history of anti-social disorders, not living with both biological parents and low closeness. In addition to that, families experiencing divorce/separation, alcohol, and substance abuse among the parents, and history of suicidal tendencies are also considered as triggers to suicide.

Unemployment among the youth is one of the biggest factors resulting to suicide, far bigger than economic crisis. Unemployment and poor long-term job prospects are frequently noted as demographic risk factors that may lead to youth suicide. According to Furlong (2013) young people between the ages of 13 and 24 who had made medically serious suicide attempts were more likely to have suffered social disadvantage than other young people. In particular, they were more likely to have no formal educational qualifications. Young people who had attempted suicide are also more often found to come from disadvantaged family backgrounds, or in poor economic circumstances. Every time a country experiences a rise in the rate of employment, the number of suicide cases tends to raise thus linking unemployment directly to suicide.

According to Keyes (2012) study there is a higher risk of death by suicide among persons with substance-use disorders as well as among heavy users of alcohol and other drugs. Based in the study, 23–46 % of suicides among youths can be attributed to alcohol intake which is one of the factors that influences youth toward suicidal behaviour. This is in agreement with what is seen in the society whereby preponderances of the youth who are alcoholic tend to have multiple problems in their lives which eventually lead them to suicidal behaviour. Alcohol consumption remains a formidable contributing factor to suicidal behaviours among youth. It is observed that some youth begin taking alcohol even when they

are in high school. Some of them start taking alcohol as a result of poor relationships with their parents or guardians.

Furthermore, Bamuhigire (2017) argues that alcoholism is considered to be a risk factor for suicidal behaviours among youth. This is because the alcoholic youth cannot perform his or her duties properly, especially within the family and in the work place. As result, conflict can arise which may end up in the youth demonstrating suicidal behaviour. Similarly, Rubin (2013) claimed that the spread of alcohol abuse is believed to have increased suicidal behaviours among youth since 1970. In most African villages where alcoholism is the order of the day especially among youth, suicidal cases are often found among them.

Parents Knowledge on Youth Suicidal Behaviours

One of the important risk factors for those youths who attempt suicide is the issues of family dissolution. Ghnayiem (2018), reported that, poor communication between parent and the youth can lead to conflict creating an atmosphere which is not conducive in the family, thus creating problematic behaviour among the youths. Poor Communication problems among adolescents' family members are likely to lead young people in committing suicide. These problems mainly appear either in poor emotional relationships between parents and adolescents or in conflicts among parents and adolescents. Several risk factors concerning family structure and processes have been linked to suicide behaviour in numerous studies. It is estimated that in 50% of youth suicide cases is as a result of family factors (Olaosebikam, 2020). One important factor is a history of mental disorders among direct family members themselves, especially depression and substance abuse. It is not clear whether these disorders directly influence the suicidal behaviour of the child, or rather do so indirectly, through mental disorders evoked in the child as a result of this family context (Olaosebikam, 2020).

According to Hilhorst et al. (2010), land has always been a matter of life and death, survival or starvation. This is because the growing population requires land as a natural resource on which some youths depend on. As the population of the people increases, vital issue arise whereby good quality of soil becomes paramount to sustain the growing population in agriculture which is the backbone of many nations. This is a great challenge if the land is not capable of accommodating the population, particularly the youth in Nyandarua County which may lead to suicidal behaviours among youths. Land is a property which is very important for production in Kenya. Land cannot be expended but it is very useful obtain production of goods and services. Land is the resource which has no cost of production while its usage can be switched from a less to a more profitable one. The researcher went further to argue that economists writing on today's modern economies seem not to be clear about what constitute the factors of production. He continues arguing that most seem to work on the basis that capital and labour are the recognized factors of production. Basing on this argument, the youth usually focus on land rather than capital and employment as a major factor of production.

Perez (2015), reported that the most frequent reasons given for suicidal behaviours among youth include family conflict especially when youth despair on life issues such as marital relationships. This is commonly seen when a youth is being refused by the parent to marry a person of his or her choice. If proper counselling is not done appropriately relational conflicts can lead to suicidal behaviours among youth. Stewart (2016), found that suicidal behaviour rates are higher among divorced youth in countries all over the world; especially in Australia where separated men are six times more likely to commit suicide than married men. In addition, in his study he observes that one-fifth of the men thought about suicide after marriage breaks up in America. This shows that divorce among youth may result to suicidal behaviours among youths.

The influence of incurable illness among youth showing suicidal behaviour is clearly demonstrated universal irrespective of religion, political association, or area. Burn, Lee and Brown (2011), argue that Hinduism forbids both suicide and active euthanasia especially when it comes to spiritual matters. The Hindu religion considers life as sacred and it should be respected no matter what kind of suffering the person is passing through. Moreover, financial constrains acts as a stressor and it can lead to suicidal behaviour and especially when one feels is hopeless and of no help in the family and the society. An increase in suicide has been noted in high number in times of economic downturns in United States in America and Portugal (Pereira et al., 2016). When financial instability is co morbid with mental disorders, there is a high tendency to have cases of suicide. The youths experience financial constrains that leads to high-risk behaviour as they seek to resolve their challenges which may succeed or not. Poor social backgrounds were identified as a risk which leads the youths to have options to suicide as a means of ending what is considered as a misery.

Strategies to Prevent Suicidal Behaviours among Youths

Befrienders Kenya (2012), is a charitable organization focusing on suicide prevention by offering free emotional support to those who may be in distress and therefore in danger of dying by suicide as well as creating awareness on suicide within communities. The youth who feels depressed, discouraged, hopeless, lonely, fearful, stressed or suicidal are helped with free and confidential counselling and attentive listening services either online or face to face. In creating awareness, the group seeks to de-stigmatize suicide and provide support to those bereaved by suicide by bringing the topic of suicide into conversations. This is important in a country like Kenya where suicide is most of the time a taboo subject. Social cohesion is the fabric that binds people at multiple levels in society – individuals, families, schools, neighbour hoods, local communities, cultural groups and society as a whole.

Every school is supposed to have response team which is essential to intervene effectively with the students who are at risk of suicidal behaviour. The team should include an administrator, school mental health professionals, school

security personnel and appropriate school personnel. Promoting preventive measures based on contextual conditions of suicide by encouraging research and studies in order to understand the circumstances such as social factors (World Health Organization, 2012). It calls all member states to increase efforts to improve mental health development and reduce suicide rates by 10% by the year 2020. Many poor people have multiple problems are suicide risks, with Self-Reliance Support for poor and needy people provides efficient and effective assistance to promote a framework for policy coordination. This strategy advocates for training, recruiting and improving the quality of personnel directly engaged as specialists in suicide countermeasures, implementing education to be able to realize when an individual person is in a situation of the mental health challenge.

It is very important to use the effective strategies for the assessment and management of suicidal behaviours. This strategy recommends assessing everyone presenting with suicidal thoughts, plans, or acts of self-harm. A careful assessment is carried out through clinical interviews and it should corroborate with collateral information (World Health Organization, 2014). At the same time these measures for effective suicidal behaviour prevention includes leader's awareness and their commitment to the victims who are attempting suicide. It is helpful to lower prevalence of heavy drinking; strategies such as awareness-raising can be implemented through general media campaigns, school health promotion activities or information targeted at vulnerable individuals through health professionals. The alcohol culture of some religions should be considered carefully before strategies are selected in order to ensure that the strategies are effective in the context. A functioning legal system is also a prerequisite for enforcing these strategies effectively. The current study aimed at exploring the coping

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed exploratory research design. The design allowed the researcher to collect qualitative data based on the objectives of the study. The design helped the researcher to gather in depth insights into a person's subjective experiences, opinions, and motivations as opposed to facts of the behaviours. Qualitative research involved collecting and analyzing non numerical data like voice recording to understand concepts, opinions, experiences, or new ideas for the research.

Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

Sampling is a procedure of selecting number of individuals from an inhabitant, whereby the selected group contains the same fundamental in the whole group. It allows the researcher to give the information gathered based on the population participated in the study. Through purposive sampling 16 participants were selected to participate in the study. The sample size included 3 youths, 3 nurses, 1 chief, 3 teachers, 3 parents and 3 Church ministers.

Data collection Instruments

The study used interview guide. Bell and Waters (2014) remind the researcher to obtain approval, then to reflect on how the question is and whether is the best method to obtain the intended information. Interview guide is primarily carried out when the researcher wants to ask the participants the open-ended questions through the phone and voice recording with consent of the interviewee as the researcher writes down the responses. There were three Interview Guides for the participants. One Interview Guide was for youths, the other one was for parents and the third one was for chief, teachers, nurses and Church ministers combined.

Data Analysis

The researcher used thematic analysis and supported the themes which were presented in direct quotes. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that can be used in a range of epistemologies and research to guide on conducting thematic analysis which primarily focuses on conducting a research (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2011). It provides a highly flexible approach that can modified for studies, providing a rich and detailed data. It does not require the detailed theoretical and technological knowledge of other qualitative approaches. It offers a more accessible form of analysis by taking a well- structured approach to handle the data, helping to produce a clear and organized report.

IV. RESULTS

The study aimed at exploring the contributing factors to suicidal behaviours among youths in Nyandarua Central Kenya. The study started by presenting the demographic details of the participants followed by the results of the study in accordance to the objectives. The participants' verbatim quotes were used in support the findings.

Demographic Details of the participants

Table 1 Demographic detail of the participants

No	Age	Gender	Level Of Education	Marital Status	Religion	Identity
1	19	F	Secondary	Single	Protestant	Youth
2	25	M	Diploma	Single	Catholic	Youth
3	26	M	BA	Single	Catholic	Youth
4	53	M	Diploma	Married	Catholic	Chief
5	54	F	BA	Married	Protestant	Nurse

6	45	F	Certificate	Married	Others	Nurse
7	42	M	Diploma	Married	Protestant	Nurse
8	46	F	MA	Married	Catholic	Teacher
9	47	F	BA	Married	Catholic	Teacher
10	38	M	Diploma	Married	Others	Teacher
11	45	F	Certificate	Married	Protestant	Parent
12	43	M	Certificate	Married	Catholic	Parent
13	40	F	BA	Married	Others	Parent
14	65	M	Diploma	Married	Protestant	Church Minister
15	40	M	BA	Single	Catholic	Church Minister
16	42	M	BA	Single	Catholic	Church Minister

The results in Table 1 shows that majority of the participants were in 40's in terms of age, the youngest been 19 years and the oldest been 65 years old. Majority of the participants were males compared to the female. In terms of educational level, most of the participants had attained a bachelor's degree while the lowest one had attained secondary education. Majority of participants were married compared to those who were single. Majority of the participants were belonging to the Catholic Church while the lowest were from other churches apart from the protestant. In terms of identity the youths, nurses and teachers were equally represented in the study.

Family risk factors to suicidal behaviours among youths in Nyandarua

Dysfunctional families

Some of the participants pointed dysfunctional families to be one of the family risk factors to suicidal behaviour among youths in Nyandarua. Sometimes the parents are not there for children to help them deal with challenges of life which lead them to commit suicide. This is reported by a teacher participant, who said,

I think in the contemporary world parents have no time to sit their children down and tell them how to handle challenges. Example when the father and mother are not living together, they are separated or divorced, children have problem with that and more when they become adolescents because they don't know which parent to identify with (Interview, P11 personal communication, January, 2022).

The aspect of breakdown as a family risk factor to suicide among youths in Nyandarua was supported by another teacher who said,

Youths are desperate with family issues. For example there was a young man who wanted to commit suicide because of academic performance whereby they were a sister and a brother. When the brother who was elder than the sister, who were schooling in the same level but not in the same school and when form four results were out, the girl who is younger than the boy performed better and the boy did

not accept that and it was very tough with the boy and after a long suffering of two or three months and he started to say that the sister is intimidating him and so what he was sharing with his friends is to come out of this world because he cannot be the first born and the younger sister prosper in academic while he was the first born himself. So, the boy wanted to commit the suicide though he did not complete it. He wanted to take poison like the Acaricide which is used to spray the animals (Interviews, P8 personal communication, January, 2022).

Financial constraints

Most of the participants reported financial constraints to be one of the major family risk factors leading young people to commit suicide in Nyandarua. For instance, a teacher participant said,

The other thing is financial constrain, especially those who have cleared the high school and they are jobless. What they do when they find themselves without money, they turn to drugs and those drugs lead them to commit suicide because they compromise their mental health. Also, when the family is poor and is not able to meet the basic needs of the youth. For example they are not able to buy him or her shoes, clothing or even books that leads to the feelings that the parents are not able to take care of them and so they commit suicide (Interviews, P10 personal communication, January, 2022).

The same theme was supported by a parent, who said,

The financial constraints, where the young people don't have money for their basic needs to buy what is so necessary for them tend to contemplate committing suicide. The parents too are needy and unable to provide for their children. Some of the youths are not able to continue with the education. This is one of the causes of committing or attempting the suicide (Interviews, P12 personal communication, January, 2022).

Financial constraints in the family as a result of employment was also mentioned a Church Minister, who said,

Unemployment is also a cause of suicide attempt. Where the young families have been retrenched from job due to

Corona pandemic, the chances of getting jobs are minimal. For those who have families, some are becoming desperate because they are not able to provide for their families and they end up committing suicide. There are two recent cases in this area where two young men attempted suicide. One of the completed through hugging himself and the other took poison but he was saved by the neighbours (Interviews, P14 personal communication, January, 2022).

In addition, the theme was supported by a nurse participant, who said,

Some of the youths are jobless, they have finished the school, they have certificates and they are not employed. Some are not willing to take any job and especially if they are graduates, they want to do what they undertook in university. You tell some of them to do any kind of job as they wait and they will not listen to that, they want to be employed with white collar job, for which it might not be available (Interviews, P5 personal communication, January, 2022).

Inappropriate use of social media

Several participants pointed the use of social media as a contributing risk factor to suicidal behaviour among the youth. Social media contributes to bullying and low self-esteem as a result of lack of validation by friends. This is echoed by a teacher participant, who reported that,

Poor performance in school, which lowers their self-esteem, cyber bullying again is very prevalent today as compared to time in the past. The name calling in Facebook. The youths are spending a lot of time in the social media, it is not like past when they used to be insulted or called names and they just leave it at that and they go their way. Nowadays they have created like a community where they meet around the social media and they so much believe in it, even the close friends are found in social media and when they're not appreciated in that kind of a circle of friends, they feel that they are worthless and they look down upon themselves and think they are not acceptable by their friends among their social circles and so they commit or attempt suicide (Interviews, P9 personal communication, January, 2022).

Furthermore, the theme by a nurse participant who said,

Internet relationships where the youths get into relationships with people they don't know. Then after realizing who they are and seeing that they have gone further and deep with the relationship sometimes they attempt or commit suicide (Interviews, P6 personal communication, January, 2022).

Domestic abuse

Majority of the participants reported domestic abuse a source of family risk factors to suicidal behaviour among youths in Nyandarua. Sometimes youths are sexually abused in their homes and since they cannot share out, it leads them in attempting suicide. Gender violence is also reported in homes

which traumatises the youth leading them to attempting suicide. This is expressed by a parent participant, who reported that,

The reasons are sexual abuses of the minor and even some girls either by the relatives, strangers and even the teachers. It causes trauma, bitterness and anger to the abused adolescents. Some do not disclose to their parents but keep it within themselves. Later they attempt the suicide or even complete it. Example, there is a teacher who was reported by some girls that they are pregnant and he is responsible (Interviews, P12 personal communication, January, 2022).

The theme is supported by another parent participant who reported that youths are thrown away from their homes and denied their basic needs that leads them to contemplate committing suicide. The participant said,

Domestic violence where the boy child or girl child will go out with friends and when they come back the parents will beat you and throw you out of the house and tell you to go and look for your own house or look for your own money where one feels bad and they attempt suicide. When the youths experience some domestic conflict in their families and they are not able to resolve those conflict and they end up by attempting or committing suicide. For example of a boy who was denied an opportunity of a business he was doing and he couldn't bear with the situation and he was saying the parents do not love him and he was trying to commit suicide but the boy was rescued before it happened (Interviews, P13 personal communication, January, 2022).

Furthermore, the theme is supported by a Nurse participant, who said,

The families have gender violence issues, so you find the parents are fighting among themselves and so those young ones have no a safe place to stay and nobody who is understanding them as they grow up. So dysfunctional families are causing this so much and there is nobody to listen to them (Interviews, P7 personal communication, January, 2022).

Drug abuse

Majority of the participants pointed out that substance use and alcoholism as a family risk factor to suicide among the youths in Nyandarua. Sometimes the parents are not aware that their children abuse drugs. When children discover the parents are aware that they are abusing drugs, they cannot face them and therefore, end committing suicide. For instance, a teacher participant said,

Substance use and alcoholism is another reason of suicidal cases. Within the last two years we have caught some students with "baghi" in the school during the opening day. After following them up, we discovered that some of them have been taking since they were in primary school. When the parent of one of them was informed, the boy who was in form four committed the suicide. He informed the other

children that he had no courage to face his parent (Interviews, P9 personal communication, January, 2022).

Moreover, a parent participant supported the theme when said,

Alcoholism and drug abuse and especially most of these young people are used in smoking Baghi and the end up attempting suicide. Other use alcohol and they usually say that they are trying to forget their problems. When they find there is no solution, they attempt the suicide. For example of a young man who had a marital conflict with the wife. The wife at a particular time went away with the children and the man was left in a desperate situation and even after being left with other family members, they were not able to provide for this man, even food he couldn't get and so he engaged himself with alcoholism and drug abuse and as a result the man was rejected by the family members. He felt that he is not loved by anyone and wished that he does not exist. Then he attempted suicide the first time and he was rescued, then the second time he committed suicide and that was all about him (Interviews, P11 personal communication, January, 2022).

Parents, knowledge on suicidal behaviour among youths in Nyandarua

Withdraw and loneliness

Parents identified withdraw and loneliness as the indicators of suicidal behaviour among the youths. This is manifested in their interactions with the members of the family. Most of times they spend time alone at home and they have no interest of interacting with other members of the family. This is supported by a parent participant, who said,

The youths don't want to associate themselves with others they withdrawal from others. They can remain in the house for many hours and when they come out from the house, they separate themselves completely from others. During the meals they avoid joining the rest. Loneliness is another aspect. Most of the times they remain in the house, they abandon their friends or they keep only those who are sharing the same thoughts of suicidal. When there is a gathering in the family, they can participate for a short time and then they disappear. In order to come one has to push them (Interviews, P8 personal communication, January, 2022).

The theme is further echoed by another parent who said,

Lack of participating in many activities in their families or even in the society since they talk about feeling empty, hopeless, or having no way out of problems and this leads them not to have a desire of being together with the others (Interviews, P12 personal communication, January, 2022).

Poor grooming

Poor grooming was another indicator of suicidal behaviour among youths in Nyandarua. This is seen through wearing clothes that are not clean and untidiness of their rooms. This is echoed by a parent, who said,

They poorly gloomed and neglect their personal hygiene. Some have no time for themselves especially for cleaning their clothes or even putting in order their own rooms. Others ask for money to buy a soap but end up using that money for alcohol or substance use (Interviews, P11 personal communication, January, 2022).

Absenteeism from school

Youths who commit suicide tend to be absent from school. They neglect their school work which leads them to attain low grades. This is supported by a parent, who said,

There is poor performance in school because the concentration is low. Some don't do or accomplish the assignments. Absenteeism from school also makes them to have a poor performance thus getting low grades. They also cheat the teachers that they missed the school because of the school fees of which they have either kept by themselves, used or they have not communicated with their parents (Interviews, P13 personal communication, January, 2022).

Furthermore, the theme is supported by another parent who said,

There is absenteeism from the school without good reasons. The youth can be in University or College and instead of reporting to the school they go to visit their friends where they can remain for a time either taking drugs or alcohol. This behaviour leads to suicidal thoughts. Others are absent from school trying to contemplate on how they will commit the suicide, by which means either hugging or poisoning. There is absenteeism from school or even dropping out. This behavior is so common in our county with the young people. They don't give reasons to the parents or to the teachers but the common thing they can give as an excuse is to cheat by saying one was sick or to tell the teacher the parent has not paid the school fees (Interviews, P12 personal communication, January, 2022).

Threatening of committing suicide

One way of knowing youth have suicidal behaviour is talk with others of committing suicide. When youths talk of committing suicide and they start withdrawing from others, it is an indicator that they are vulnerable to suicide. This is echoed by parent, participant who said,

Others you will hear them talking about issues of am going to kill myself. I wish I am dead and you will hear them having such talks as if they are people who are hopeless. Mostly they don't open up and you might not realize fully what they are going through because they are not ready to disclose. They want to be left aside, even if you try to enquire; they are not ready to say what is happening (Interviews, P11 personal communication, January, 2022).

Poor relationship with the parents

Also poor relationship with the parents was pointed out as an indicator of suicidal behaviour among youths in

Nyandarua. When youths are brought up in dysfunctional families, they feel unaccepted and unloved and it can easily lead them to committing suicide. They are also likely to engage into drug abuse. This supported by a parent participant who said,

The conflicts and quarrels lead to poor relationships in a family and the children may feel unloved or unaccepted thus leading to attempting or committing suicide. The dysfunctional families are the ones who have no time for each other. The parents have no time for their children. The youths who are addicted with drugs or substance use have a poor relationship with their parents. At a certain point the youths feel useless and unproductive in their life and also in the family. They start to compare themselves with the other siblings and this makes them to feel hopeless thus leading to attempt or committing suicide (Interviews, P 13 personal communication, January, 2022).

Strategies to prevent suicidal behaviour among youths in Nyandarua

Several themes on strategies to prevent suicide among youths in Nyandarua emerged from the data.

Guidance and counselling

Majority of the participants pointed guidance and counselling as a preventive strategy for suicide among youths. Both the schools and the Churches can play a significant role in preventing suicide among youths by introducing guidance and counselling. For instance, a teacher participant said,

The Church has come up with guidance and counselling and also in schools, though am talking as a teacher but I see what is happening in the churches. In schools we have an office of guidance and counselling room, where the students go and pour out what they are feeling and they are guided to curb such kind of feelings (Interviews, P 10 personal communication, January, 2022).

Furthermore, the same theme of guidance and counselling was echoed by a Church minister, who said,

Guiding and counselling personnel who are professionals are invited in the Church from time to time to give counselling to our youths and also parents require counseling. We also urge the parents in the Church to allow their youths who have problems to go to counsellors to be helped (Interviews, P16 personal communication, January, 2022).

Sensitization through workshops and seminars

Almost all the participants mentioned sensitization through workshops as a way preventing suicide among youths in Nyandarua. Different strategies to sensitize youths were revealed including workshops, social media and barazas. For instance, a Church minister said,

Sensitization about these problems that we are experiencing. Commenting about the social media because even on TV and on radio there are professional counsellors

that are invited by the social media and they talk on TV sensitizing the people on what are the symptoms, what can you do when you feel signs of depression (Interviews, P15 personal communication, January, 2022).

The theme was supported by teacher, who said,

Organize for the workshops and call for an outsider who comes and give the talk and tell them the consequences of committing the suicide. The family is affected and the society. Once you try and do not succeed you find yourself in a trauma. Sensitization is done in schools where we call a psychologist or a counsellor to create more awareness about the suicidal risks, the cause and how one can seek help instead of keeping silent and finally to take an action. We also organize with the local leaders to support the youths around our area and they organize for youth workshops and one of our teachers who is a counsellor attends the workshop to sensitize the youth more about the suicidal risks (Interviews, P 8 personal communication, January, 2022).

In addition, the theme was supported by a chief participant, who said,

Sensitization through barazas, where we usually speak the dangers of suicide and we also give the youths hope. The government can continue with “KaziMtaani” of late we had engaged a number of youths who were earning their living through working in public and they were getting money on weekly basis. The rate of crime went down because most of the youths were engaged. The parents were able to cater for their families and they changed their family life of living (Interviews, P4 personal communication, January, 2022).

Support Groups

Support group was another theme that was identified as preventive strategy to suicide among youths. These are groups among youths who attempted suicide before and come together to support each other and especially on stigma associated with attempting suicide. For instance, a teacher participant said,

Support groups is another strategy where we form a group of those who have suicidal thoughts together with others students in order not to be stigmatized or labeled. With the help of the counsellor, they are able to support one another and even to help other students. Some of them are able to share their issues together and one is allowed to share only when one is out of danger and he/she is willing to share with the others (Interviews, P10 personal communication, January, 2022).

The theme of support group is echoed by a chief participant, who said,

The National Youth Service (NYS) had a program where they had engaged the youths in working, they also formed the Sacco and if the government can come up with the policy to assist youths like the one which was there before

where the youths were given the money and certain percentage was left with the government and they were given the money latter where they could also start their Sacco and they usually do well. So NYS is one of the Institutions which have helped so many youths in Nyandarua County and also in the whole country. They also give them courses. Some are taken to Universities or Colleges (Interviews, P4 personal communication, January, 2022).

Engage youths in sports

Majority of the participants expressed that engaging youths in sports can play a critical role in preventing youth to attempt or commit suicide. Engaging youths in sports helps them to deal with stress to avoid staying idle. A chief participant said,

Engage the youths in sports and during the sports we are able to speak with them and as they are working in the “KaziMtaani” we have to get time to speak with them, engage them with what they are supposed to be doing and also to assist them with what they will do with what they have earned (Interviews, P4 personal communication, January, 2022).

The theme was further supported by a nurse participant, who said,

Joining the sports activities like the ones going on within our county where I saw some were running, praying football. They can also join youth groups in the Church. They also have sports activities and this helps them to be busy instead of being idle (Interviews, P6 personal communication, January, 2022).

In addition, the theme was echoed by a parent participant, who said,

There are activities like sports football, netball, table tennis and athletics which are organized in our county to keep the youth busy in their free time because this is the moment when, they join their friends or their peer groups and finally they involve themselves in drugs or alcohol which makes them to feels they are worthless in the community or they are dependent to their parent who not able to provide for them. The sports are of great help to our youths (Interviews, P12 personal communication, January, 2022).

Also the theme was supported by a Church minister, who said,

The games and sports should be encouraged to the youths. The Church organizes the sports and other activities for them and the even we have internal and external competitions with other churches from other localities. The youths have a lot of energies and if it's not directed properly it ends up going in the wrong place (Interviews, P14 personal communication, January, 2022).

V. DISCUSSION

The study aimed at exploring the contributing factors to suicidal behaviours among youths in Nyandarua Central

Kenya. Some of the participants pointed dysfunctional families to be one of the family risk factors to suicidal behaviour among youths in Nyandarua. Sometimes the parents are not there for children to help them deal with challenges of life which contribute to leading them to commit suicide. These findings were consistent with findings of Oppenheimer, Stone and Hankin (2018) that in their Research concluded that attempted suicides are directly linked to negative parent-child relationships. These may include the child maltreatment, family history of anti-social disorders, not living with both biological parents and low closeness. In addition to that, families experiencing divorce/separation, alcohol, and substance abuse among the parents, and history of suicidal tendencies are also considered as triggers to suicide. Moreover, the findings were in agreement with the study of Hazel et al. (2014), who observed that relationship with parents undergo normative, developmental shifts as youth strive for autonomy. Many youths experience decline in quality of parent child relationships around adolescence, including an increase as they grow and they encounter a negative relationship which triggers suicidal behavior among the youths. As a result of negative parent relationships leads to unskilled parenting to cope with the demands of life because the youth's emotional developmental needs remain unfulfilled.

Most of the participants reported financial constraints to be one of the major family risk factors leading young people to commit suicide in Nnyandarua. The findings were in line with findings of Beautrais et al. (2012) who found unemployment and poor long-term job prospects are frequently noted as demographic risk factors of youth suicide. The findings showed that young people between the ages of 13 and 24 who had made medically serious suicide attempts were more likely to have suffered social disadvantage than other young people. In particular, they were more likely to have no formal educational qualifications. Young people who had attempted suicide are also more often found to come from disadvantaged family backgrounds, or in poor economic circumstances.

Majority of the participants pointed out that substance use and alcoholism as a family risk factor to suicide among the youths in Nyandarua. Sometimes the parents are not aware that their children abuse drugs. When children discover the parents are aware that they are abusing drugs, they cannot face them and therefore, end committing suicide. The findings were in agreement with findings of Keyes (2012) which found that there is a higher risk of death by suicide among persons with substance-use disorders as well as among heavy users of alcohol and other drugs. Furthermore, the findings were consistent with argument of Bamuhigire (2017) who claimed that alcoholism is considered to be a risk factor for suicidal behaviours among youth. This is because the alcoholic youth cannot perform his or her duties properly, especially within the family and in the work place. As result, conflict can arise which may end up in the youth demonstrating suicidal behaviour.

Also poor relationship with the parents came out as an indicator of suicidal behaviour among youths in Nyandarua. When youths are brought up in dysfunctional families, they feel

unaccepted and unloved and it can easily lead them to committing suicide. They are also likely to engage into drug abuse. The findings were consistent with findings of Ghnayiem (2018), who reported that, poor communication between parent and the youth can lead to conflict creating an atmosphere which is not conducive in the family, thus creating problematic behaviour among the youth. The other issue that this study proposes to highlight is the Communication problems among adolescents' family members may be an important factor for those attempting suicide in this group. These problems mainly appear either in poor emotional relationships between parents and adolescents or in conflicts among parents and adolescents.

Majority of the participants pointed guidance and counselling as a preventive strategy for suicide among youths. Both the schools and the Churches play a significant role in preventing suicide among youths by introducing guidance and counselling. The findings were consistent with findings of Befrienders Kenya (2012), who found that charitable organization focusing on suicide prevention by offering free emotional support to those who may be in distress and therefore in danger of dying by suicide as well as creating awareness on suicide within communities. The youth who feels depressed, discouraged, hopeless, lonely, fearful, stressed or suicidal are helped with free and confidential counselling and attentive listening services either online (during pandemic period) or face to face. Moreover, Gregory (2019), reported that one of the most common suicide prevention techniques is psychopathology also known as talk therapy in form of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). The individuals are taught how to deal with stress and stressful life experiences. When the thoughts of suicide arise, they are redirected in different ways than attempting to commit suicide.

Almost all the participants mentioned sensitization to through workshops as a way preventing suicide among youths in Nyandarua. Different strategies to sensitize youths were revealed including workshops, social media and barazas. The findings were supported by Hamrick, Goldman, Sapp and Kohler (2014), who argued that every school is supposed to have response team which is essential to intervene effectively with the students who are at risk of suicidal behaviour. The team should include an administrator, school mental health professionals, school security personnel and appropriate school personnel. Hamrick, Goldman, Sapp and Kohler (2014), carried out a study in United States measuring teachers' abilities to identify symptoms of suicide behaviour in adolescence. The same findings were supported by World Health Organization (2012) who claimed that the main objective is strengthening support for practical initiatives at the community level: promoting preventive measures based on contextual conditions of suicide by encouraging research and studies in order to understand the circumstances such as social factors. Similarly, the findings were supported by Ndengwa, Munene and Oladipo (2017), who argued that lived experience of suicide risk and suicide prevention professionals can be carried out through the media. There was an agreement between two participant groups where the family members and friends should ask directly

about suicidal thoughts and intentions, listen to response without judgmental and the person at risk that they care they want to help. Exploration and follow up is through the media where the victim responds to the support of family members.

Support group was another theme that was identified as preventive strategy to suicide among youths. These are groups among youths who attempted suicide before and come together to support each other and especially on stigma associated with attempting suicide. These findings were consistent with World Health Organization (2012) who found Self-Reliance Support for poor and needy people provides efficient and effective assistance to promote a framework for policy coordination. This strategy advocates for training, recruiting and improving the quality of personnel directly engaged as specialists in suicide countermeasures, implementing education to be able to realize when an individual person is in a situation of the mental health challenge.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study revealed those risk factors such as dysfunctional families; financial constraints; inappropriate use of social media; domestic abuse; and drug abuse are the contributing factors to suicidal behaviours among youths in Nyandarua. Also, the findings showed that parents have knowledge about suicidal behaviours among youths. Parents mentioned withdraw and loneliness; poor grooming; absenteeism from school; threatening of committing suicide; and poor relationship with the parents as indicators suicidal behaviours among youths in Nyandarua. Finally, the stakeholders pointed out that strategies such as guidance and counselling; sensitization through workshops and seminars; support Groups; and engaging youths in sports as preventive measures to suicidal behaviours among youths in Nyandarua.

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